

13enfornan Atty Dkt 80146.002
2300-6146.20
PATENT

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HUMAN MONOClonal ANTIBODIES SPECIFIC FOR
HEPATITIS C VIRUS (HCV) E2 ANTIGEN

Cross-Reference to Related Application

10 This application is a continuation-in-part of
- U.S. application Serial No. 08/635,109, filed April 19,
1996, ^{Serial No. 08/635,109, filed April 19, 1996} from which priority is claimed pursuant to 35
U.S.C. §120 and which is incorporated herein by reference
in its entirety.

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Technical Field

The present invention relates to compositions derived from immunoglobulin molecules specific for the hepatitis C virus (HCV). More particularly, the invention is related to recombinant human monoclonal antibodies which are capable of specifically binding with HCV E2 antigen.

Background

25 Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection occurs throughout the world and is the major cause of
transfusion-associated hepatitis. There are an estimated
150,000 new cases of HCV infection each year in the
United States. The seroprevalence of anti-HCV antibodies
30 in blood donors from around the world has been shown to
vary between 0.02 and 1.23%, with rates in some countries
as high as about 19%. In addition to being the
predominate cause of transfusion-induced hepatitis, HCV
is also a common cause of hepatitis in individuals
35 exposed to blood or blood products. Thus, recipients of